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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4521st meeting

Thursday, 25 April 2002, 10.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mrs. D'achon
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Ms. Lajous
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan.

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02-35252 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Council decides to extend an invitation under rule 37 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Sima Samar, Vice-Chairman of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan and Minister for Women.

Ms. Sima Samar, Vice-Chairman of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan and Minister for Women, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Sima Samar, Vice-Chairman of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan and Minister for Women.

I give the floor to Ms. Samar.

Ms. Samar (Afghanistan): I am delighted to be here today in an institution devoted to peace. I congratulate the United Nations for standing behind its mandate of supporting global stability by rising to the responsibility of supporting the peace process in Afghanistan. That commitment by the United Nations and its Member States has given the Afghan people the confidence to stand against the forces of oppression and evil and to move forward in restoring peace in our war-torn country.

I am pleased that we have made great progress in this short period. In the past few months, we have moved quickly from Bonn to Tokyo to Kabul, putting in place political processes and a Government framework for the daunting task of reconstruction and rebuilding Afghanistan. The Afghan people stand behind the peace and pledge that they will work to bring about stability. We look forward to the day when our national army is prepared and mobilized well enough to respond to acts of violence and instability in any part of our country. But one cannot expect a Government in place for only four months to be able to respond to the level of challenges that we face after more than 20 years of destruction and of a culture of war.

Without the immediate expansion of international peacekeeping forces, peace, democracy, reconstruction and the restoration of women's rights and human rights will not be possible in our country. The rights of women, in particular, are put at risk by the absence of security. Women continue to fear violence and to worry about the imposition of Taliban-like restrictions. Unless greater security is provided, the inclusion of women in the Loya Jirga may be undermined and the distribution of identification cards to enable women's participation in future elections imperilled. Women in Afghanistan are finally beginning to see a little light after a very long darkness. But the gains that have been made in the past four months could easily be lost unless security is greatly improved.

We are told that an expansion of peacekeeping forces is too expensive. But another cycle of war will prove an even greater expense to the world: it will be costly in terms of the loss of human lives. Another period of violence will also risk the money and support that have already been invested in the peace process. Continued instability may also undo all the political work that has been put in place with so much effort by the people of Afghanistan and friendly nations everywhere. It will waste perhaps our last real chance to reverse the decades of violence and to create peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the region.

We have heard that Member States are reluctant to extend the security forces in Afghanistan because of the fear that the soldiers will face risks of kidnapping and killing. Yes, those risks may be there, and we must respond by putting everything possible in place to give those soldiers the proper support so that they are not left vulnerable. But if we do not act against the problems that Afghanistan faces, the risks will be even greater.

I know that what I am asking for is not easy to provide. But I ask the leaders of all nations to consider carefully their responsibilities and to weigh the political and economic costs of expanding and extending the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) against the great risks of not taking action and not strengthening security.

Finally, security means immediate and long-term funds to strengthen the Government overall. The amount of aid that the interim Government has received has been very small compared with the pledges and, especially, with the tremendous need. We need financial resources to demonstrate that peace creates changes in the conditions of people's lives.

Let us not leave the job of restoring peace in Afghanistan half finished. The international community must renew its commitment to come together collectively and decisively to root out the elements of instability and give sustained support to rebuilding the peace in Afghanistan and stabilizing the region. We have learned that violence does not simply stay within the borders of Afghanistan, but that it grows roots and extends to areas well beyond the country and the region. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Together, we have a chance to change the future of Afghanistan, to create a model of democracy and peace in an area that is fragile and to restore women's rights and human rights. Help us move forward towards that hope and dream. Help us release the men and women of Afghanistan from a cycle of oppression, isolation and war. With the support of the world behind us, we will step forward confidently, step by step, to transform the future of Afghanistan, the region and the whole world.

Once again, I am deeply thankful to you, Sir, and your colleagues in the Security Council for this meeting on Afghanistan. I know how fully the Council has to concentrate its attention on the Middle East because of the dramatic urgency of the situation in that region. Let me express the support of the Afghan people and Government for the action of the Security Council in favour of peace in the Middle East. We highly support the necessary and urgent implementation of all the resolutions of the Security Council on the Middle East.

We hope for a world without violence and for peace throughout the planet.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

I call on Mr. Prendergast.

Mr. Prendergast: It is a pleasure to be addressing this Council again in the presence of Ms. Sima, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Kabul during the Secretary-General's visit there recently and who struck everyone by the vigour and forthrightness of her positions.

It has been about a month since this Council last considered Afghanistan in an open meeting. One month is quite a long time in the eventful calendar of recent Afghan history, and this past month has been no exception. While I will, as usual, try to cover a range of issues, I would like to begin, if I may, with the emergency Loya Jirga, which is to take place this June and which is the single most significant political benchmark in the Bonn process since the establishment of the Interim Authority.

As I am sure Council members will recall, the Loya Jirga is to comprise some 1,500 delegates, of whom approximately 1,000 will be elected indirectly by the people and 500 selected by the Independent Commission for the Emergency Loya Jirga. In the first phase, district assemblies will gather to select a slate of representatives, known as "electoral colleges". These electoral colleges will then travel to one of nine provincial centres. During the second phase, between 20 May and 3 June, the electoral colleges will elect a number of delegates from among themselves to represent each province at the Loya Jirga.

Given the logistical difficulties, the security environment and the extremely short time frame, even indirect elections present a great challenge. Nonetheless, the first phase has begun on schedule and with success. The first district assembly was held on 14 April in Mordian district, Jowzjan province. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi attended that assembly and was greeted warmly by the 2,000 people who had travelled there. Mr. Brahimi has reported that enthusiasm for the Loya Jirga is growing across Afghanistan. People are looking forward to their first chance in many years to take part in the political process.

Ten other district assemblies have since taken place and a total of 200 electoral college members have been selected. Some results are particularly heartening

to those who hope to see a multi-ethnic, representative Government in Afghanistan. I refer in particular to the fact that Pashtuns have been chosen in areas where they are in a minority and that at least one woman has already been selected, a modest achievement in most societies other than Afghanistan. As the Council may recall, 160 women will be selected by the Independent Commission itself, but there is no limit to the number of women who might be elected. We hope to see this positive precedent repeated many times through both the first and second phases so that the incredible sacrifices and tremendous responsibilities that Afghan women have borne through these past decades of war are suitably reflected in the composition of the Loya Jirga.

All possible steps are being taken, given the limited resources at hand, to promote a fair selection process. Forty teams of district organizers are currently being trained by United Nations staff and members of the Loya Jirga Commission. Operations centres are being set up in each regional centre and international monitors will conduct spot checks to ensure that the process is held in accordance with procedures established by the Loya Jirga Commission.

However, there is already clear evidence that some commanders and low-level administrators are planning to try to force through the selection of their own people. Discussions on how to provide security for the second phase of the selection process, and the Loya Jirga itself, are ongoing with the Interim Administration and with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) within the limitations of its current mandate.

At present, we can say that the emergency Loya Jirga process is on track. At the same time, I would not wish to disguise the many problems and obstacles that lie ahead. The period ahead will be a busy and challenging one for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for the Interim Administration and for its international partners, but we remain hopeful and confident that the emergency Loya Jirga will take place on schedule and that it will lead to a smooth transition to the next phase of the Bonn process.

Another significant political development is the return of the former King, Zahir Shah, who, as the Council knows, had been exiled since 1973. The former King has declared his support for Chairman Karzai and the Interim Administration. He has emphasized, too, that he returned not to try to revive the monarchy, but to unite and be close to his fellow Afghans.

Amid these signs of hope, a series of violent incidents has heightened security concerns. These incidents include a failed attempt in Jalalabad to assassinate the Minister of Defence that killed six bystanders and injured many more; a rocket attack on ISAF; several shooting attacks on ISAF patrols; a general increase in the presence of armed men on the streets of Kabul; demonstrations in Nangarhar and Helmand against the Interim Authority's poppy eradication policy, resulting in 16 deaths; skirmishes between Pashtun and Tajik troops in the west of the country; sporadic fighting in Nimroz between a commander backed by Ismail Khan and the provincial authorities; and fighting in Wardak province over the governorship of the province.

In particular, I would like, in this context, to highlight the tragic killing on 10 April of Mr. Shah Sayed, an Afghan working for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). His death adds to a disturbing pattern of attacks on civilians, including humanitarian personnel, especially in the north of Afghanistan.

The Interim Administration has taken some actions to respond to the deterioration of the security situation, though its capabilities are limited. In particular, the Administration sent a delegation to mediate the conflict in Wardak province, which occurred at Maidan Shahr, not far from Kabul. This delegation had some success, although tensions remain.

The Interim Administration's National Security Directorate also carried out mass arrests in early April, the aim of which was described as being to pre-empt suspected terrorist attacks. The International Committee of the Red Cross was given access to the prisoners and a few were released, but more than 200 remain in custody. Three weeks after the arrests, no charges have been brought, nor has evidence against the suspects been produced. UNAMA representatives met with the head of the Security Directorate to express their concerns. They were assured that the investigation would be completed soon, after which charges would be pressed or prisoners would be released. UNAMA will be following this issue very closely.

The Interim Administration has at the same time made a determined effort to eradicate this year's poppy crop. With the financial assistance of the United Kingdom, the Administration has given farmers a choice between accepting financial compensation for each hectare destroyed and facing the forcible eradication of their crop. This policy has provoked fierce opposition from the farmers. The Administration has nonetheless managed to destroy more than 2,000 hectares and has paid $3 million in compensation. I might mention here that the European wholesale value of the eradicated crop is in excess of $300 million.

There are, however, 65,000 hectares which are still estimated to be under poppy cultivation, and harvesting of the crop has already begun in some provinces. The Interim Administration faces active resistance and lacks the means to carry out a comprehensive destruction of the crop. The Administration has asked for international assistance to help farmers plant and market alternative crops. We urge the international community to respond to these appeals. If the Administration is successful, this will not only help to improve security in Afghanistan, but it will also reduce problems stemming from the illegal drug trade in consuming countries as well.

Members of the Council have often noted the need for Afghans to take charge of their own security. In this regard, the Interim Administration has outlined a coherent vision for its future security sector and a plan to bring about that vision. In his briefing during informal consultations on 5 April, the Secretary-General noted the very positive results of the Geneva conference of security donors. At that conference, the Interim Administration presented comprehensive papers on the formation of an Afghan national police force and army. A follow-up conference will be held next month.

The need for an effective police and corrections system is demonstrated by recent allegations of human rights abuses, which I would like to address now. In early April, a member of the Loya Jirga Commission and representatives of the Hazara community approached UNAMA with allegations that mass graves had been found in Bamiyan province. UNAMA fielded a preliminary mission to the area and, based on the findings of that mission, Mr. Brahimi has asked the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to identify forensic experts in the human rights field who could travel to Bamiyan to conduct a more thorough investigation. This mission will take place later in the month.

Also, during his visit to Mazar-i-Sharif on 14 and 15 April, Mr. Brahimi raised with local leaders, including Mr. Rashid Dostum and Mr. Mohammad Atta, the issue of ongoing attacks on Pashtun minorities in the north. Mr. Brahimi gave them copies of the Human Rights Watch report that documented such incidents. He emphasized the need to take effective steps quickly to end the attacks. The leaders gave assurances that they would do so.

I turn now to issues of relief and reconstruction. In the past few months there have been signs that the economy has begun to recove and that this recovery is reaching many Afghans. While the international community must remain focused on meeting basic human needs, there is growing scope for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities as well.

It is therefore a matter of great concern that funds pledged at Tokyo for such activities have been extremely slow to arrive. While donors may, understandably, want to wait for more stability before disbursing funds, we must also recognize that implementing rehabilitation and reconstruction projects will greatly help bring about that stability. It is a chicken-and-egg situation. As resolution 1401 (2002) — which was adopted unanimously by the Council — recognizes, the provision of reconstruction assistance can, under certain conditions, promote conditions of law and order. We would therefore urge Member States to meet their pledges so that reconstruction and development funding can be used to help promote a secure environment for political and economic change.

In anticipation of the funding pledged at Tokyo, UNAMA has begun to plan recovery and development activities in cooperation with the Interim Authority. At the request of the Authority, UNAMA is leading efforts to design and implement a series of integrated area development programmes in ten priority regions of the country.

On a related matter, the first meeting of the Implementation Group was held in Kabul on 10 and 11 April. The Council will recall that the Implementation Group was formed during the Tokyo conference to oversee the use of funds pledged for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. At the meeting, the Interim Administration presented its current operating budget.

Many donors congratulated the Administration on its ability to produce a clear and realistic budget, an impressive national development framework draft, and a list of quick-impact projects to be implemented immediately. Mr. Karzai told the group that donor disbursements must be urgently accelerated to meet the operating budget and emergency needs.

The pace of return of refugees from neighbouring countries has exceeded expectations. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has estimated that in the first eight weeks of its facilitated repatriation programme, more than 300,000 refugees have returned to Afghanistan. This represents the fastest return of refugees anywhere since the end of the Kosovo war in 1999.

In the area of food assistance, efforts by the World Food Programme to meet the immediate food needs of more than 6 million Afghans are increasingly jeopardized by a serious depletion of cash and commodity resources. On 18 April, confirmed donor pledges for food assistance amounted to less than half of what is required to sustain current operations. Furthermore, recent vulnerability assessments have shown that the food needs in Afghanistan are greater than originally estimated. United Nations efforts to mitigate food insecurity have been constrained by inter-factional fighting and demonstrations against the poppy eradication campaign in the south and east of the country.

As we have seen so often in Afghanistan, humanitarian emergencies succeed each other, and their damaging effects are exacerbated by destroyed infrastructure and weakened social coping mechanisms. After great efforts were made to provide assistance to the victims of two earthquakes near Nahrin in northern Afghanistan, reports emerged of a massive plague of locusts in the north. This plague directly threatens crops in Balkh, Kunduz, Baghlan and Samanghan provinces, which are already suffering from drought. FAO has deployed its existing stocks of pesticides and is expecting additional stocks in the next three weeks to address the locust plague.

In the health sector, a nationwide polio immunization campaign was launched on 16 April, targeting 6 million Afghan children and mobilizing the support of 60,000 volunteers. These vaccination efforts are expected to succeed in stopping the transmission of polio in Afghanistan by the end of 2002.

I have tried to describe a picture of the United Nations working with greater coordination among its constituent parts, as well as hand in hand with the Interim Authority created by the Bonn Agreement. International support for the Bonn process has been generous so far, and instrumental in the progress that has been made.

At the same time, I would not want to leave any illusions about the obstacles ahead, the scale of the resources still required or the pressures that the Interim Administration continues to face. After so many years of war and civil war in Afghanistan, the political and humanitarian progress of the past several months is very encouraging. However, this progress is still by no means assured. Security remains a major challenge in many parts of the country, and substantial financial assistance is going to be required. I would therefore like to conclude with an appeal to international community to speed up the delivery of its assistance and to broaden its scope to include still unmet needs related to security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Prendergast, for his comprehensive briefing.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.15 p.m.